Purpose
To test the effectiveness for children with disabilities of a highly resourced data-driven Birth-5 early care and education program that targets children at risk of school failure because of socioeconomic factors.

Background
Educare Central Maine is a partnership with the Waterville, ME, public schools; Kennebec Valley (ME) Community Action Program EarlyHeadStart, and the philanthropic community. The Educare Learning Network is a partnership between the Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, other national philanthropies, and public-private partners in more than a dozen states across America.

Educare Central Maine serves children from birth till kindergarten entry. The 21 schools in the Educare Learning Network seek to close the achievement gap for children from families at risk because of socioeconomic factors. The Educare model is based on research from early childhood development, education, social work, and other allied fields. Four core features comprise the Educare model: data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices, and intense family engagement. Some families, whose income is over the eligibility threshold, tuition their children to Educare Central Maine.

Methods
We administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4) to children at Educare Central Maine at age 3, the first of their first year in Head Start (unless that was within 6 months of that age assessment date), and every spring thereafter. We analyzed PPVT-4 standard scores with linear mixed models with censoring (2.8 data points per child). Figure 2's spaghetti plot shows PPVT-4 standard score in months in Educare, gender, income status, and disability status. Horizontal lines on these plots represent age-appropriate scores. Positive slope indicates gains that are faster than expected based on chronological age.

Results
Table 1 presents coefficient table from censored linear mixed models with interactions. Because interactions were not significant (p > 0.05), model was re-fit without interactions (results also in Table 2).

Survival analyses considered entrance and exit dates from 441 children (including children still too young to have had their first PPVT-4 assessment at time of analysis). Table 3 shows key results from these analyses. While median age at exit was just over 5 years old, and some children entered at less than 1 month old, the median age at entry was 33 months old (shortly before the transition from EarlyHeadStart to HeadStart). Thus, while maximum time in Educare was 6 years, the median time was 5 years in Educare.

Discussion
In a highly resourced Birth-5 program for children at risk, children with disabilities gain vocabulary scores as fast as their typically developing peers without disabilities.

Connection to Conference Theme (“Lift Your Voice!”)
Educare serves as a demonstration program and a platform for research and policy change. Parent involvement is a core component of the model. Parents are involved in program activities and in policy implications, as they choose. For example, this year, a parent of a child with special needs testified to the US Congress in support of the Health and Social Services Appropriations legislation against proposed cuts to the state-funded portion of Head Start programs and cited her child’s progress at Educare.

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